

2012 Prius C



We are nearing the last of the car reviews, but before we move on to the best car in the multiverse let's talk about a pretty good car. I say 'pretty good' because it falls somewhere between the promise of a truly great green-technology car and the slander spewed by the truck-nuts crowd. The 2012 Prius C ("C" for 'communist' I guess) was the first new car I've ever owned. As the BMW's transmission was in its final death, a repair that would have cost me more than its resale value, I made it to the Toyota lot and drove off with the latest in hybrid technology.

Let's just do a simple breakdown of the pros and cons, with the cons first. Here is the main criticism I get from the anti-Prius people: It's ugly. I disagree, though. It's not ugly, per se, but rather it's incredibly boring. The yawningly uninspired shape has all the lines and curves of an electric toaster from the 60s but without the sex appeal. The other criticism I heard nearly daily goes something like 'It is really worse on the environment because of the battery disposal'. Yes, that's true if you ignore that it was not designed to combat the 'global crisis' of batteries in landfills, oh Man of Straw. But the car did have some real problems- maybe 'annoyances' is a better word. For one, the visibility into the blind spots was bad with the thick rear pylons, excessively sloped hatch back, and low seat configuration all conspiring to block the rear view. And, while otherwise a great car to drive, long hauls on the highway were draining. This was mainly due to the constant attention required by the twitchy steering and the slow throttle response in hilly terrain, not to mention the fact that its slab sides acted like sails during winds or when being passed by semis. I often arrived exhausted after four or five hours of that.

However, on the pro side, this car really lived up to its promise of good gas mileage. Even critics who confronted me about my car that apparently ran on socialism and kale considered buying one when I told them my 10 gallon fill up lasted about a month. The biggest problem I found about the mileage was the risk of running out of gas because I forgot the thing even needed it! Another feature I liked was the drive-by-wire system, giving it zero torque steer and ridiculous stability while hydroplaning – without the wheel fighting back and trying to kill me. Unbelievably, the Prius would walk through snow owing to its high ground clearance and battery weight. (An off switch to the traction control would have helped it deliver power better in those conditions, though.) Ultimately, I got rid of it because I really wasn't taking full advantage of the hybrid technology, most of my driving being long distance. I also wanted something that didn't wear me out by the time I got where I was going. Despite never figuring out how to say the plural of Prius, it's a pretty good car.